

PRESS RELEASE

House Armed Services Committee Bob Stump, Chairman

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OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN BOB STUMP HEARING ON MISSILE DEFENSE POLICY AND PROGRAMS

Today, the committee is pleased to welcome the Deputy Secretary of Defense and the head of the Ballistic Missile Defense Organization to testify on the Administration's missile defense policy and programs.

The fiscal year 2002 budget request represents a significant increase in funding for ballistic missile defense programs. For those of us who support a robust missile defense program, we welcome the more aggressive approach taken by this Administration which, I hope, will hasten the day when all Americans are protected against the growing threat of ballistic missile attack. I commend the Administration for elevating the importance of this issue in the public debate.

An essential part of any missile defense program is a strong testing regime. Again, I commend the Administration for seeking to strengthen the testing program and I congratulate all those who played a role in the successful missile intercept test that occurred last weekend. While any test program will inevitably result in its share of failures and successes, the July 14 intercept demonstrated again that it is technologically possible to "hit a bullet with a bullet." Missile defense is technologically feasible, and our job now is to figure out the best way to get on with the task.

That said, there are significant policy and programmatic issues raised by the Administration's new missile defense approach. Importantly, the issue of the 30-year old ABM Treaty - which limits our ability to defend ourselves - must be confronted squarely. The Administration has chosen, in Secretary Wolfowitz' words, to "move beyond" the treaty. I believe this is a wise decision. We should seek to do so cooperatively with the Russians, but unilaterally if necessary.

An effective deterrent for the threats we will likely confront in the 21st century is one that balances offensive forces with defensive forces. For too long, that balance has been skewed as we consciously chose to remain vulnerable to even a single ballistic missile launched in our direction. The Administration has now chosen to correct that imbalance - a decision that reflects a sea-change in policy.

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As for funding, the fiscal year 2002 budget request seeks to develop a layered defense against ballistic missiles in various stages of their trajectory. It is designed to explore a range of technologies. I believe it reflects a prudent response to an urgent threat.

Clearly, many of the issues associated with the Administration's missile defense approach are controversial. This morning, we hope to gain a clearer understanding of why the Administration has chosen this course and what we can expect will result.

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